India to accelerate the growing India-U.S. economic relations and realise the full potential of bilateral economic ties.

Rail links between India and Nepal

†961. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Nepal have agreed to establish rail links;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the rail links are likely to be established between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) With a view to facilitating movement of cargo between Calcutta/Haldia to Birgunj in Nepal via Raxaul in Bihar, a rail link has been established with Indian assistance between Raxaul and Birgunj. For operationalising this link, a Railway Protocol and Customs Agreement would have to be concluded between the two sides. Two rounds of discussions have taken place in May 2002 in Kathmandu and in September 2002 in Delhi. Some progress has been made and the two sides have agreed to continue their discussions with a view to finalizing the Agreement.

Non-Cooperation by Indian Mission in Deportation of Abu Salem

962. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Mission in Lisbon did not extend co-operation to the visiting CBI team for deportation of underworld don help up in Portugal prison;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether efforts were also made during Prime Minister's visit to Europe, early last month, for extradition of the underworld fugitive wanted in India for criminal charges; and

(c) what other attempts have been made at the diplomatic front in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No. The Indian Mission in Lisbon extended all possible cooperation to the visiting CBI team.

(b) No.

(c) The Government of India has made strong diplomatic demarches with the Government of Portugal.

Exchanging crucial Information with USA

963. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and US are exchanging crucial information on North Korea and Pakistan as a part of a bilateral cooperation on global issues;

(b) whether involvement of Pakistan with North Korea and Iraq and its role in international terrorism and nuclear/missile proliferation are now more evident than ever before; and

(c) if so, government's views in this regard and our relations with US?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) India and the United States exchange views on all international issues of mutual interest, including on